

At Midnight by thegirlcourageous

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Summary:

After many weeks away on tour, Richie has finally hit his breaking point.

At Midnight

It was midnight. Eddie was close to sleep when his phone rang. He answered without looking, sleepily mumbling, “ello?” into the phone. For several long moments, no one said anything. But he could hear breathing. Eddie opened his eyes, more awake by the second.

“Richie?” It could only be Richie. That or a wrong number. But before he could check, he got a reply.

“...yeah.” Richie exhaled. He sounded exhausted.

“Everything alright? It's like 3 am where you are.”

Eddie was a worrier, alright? He couldn't help it. There was always something that could be wrong, and he always attempted to be prepared for whatever situation would arise, to stay one step ahead of catastrophe. Whatever life threw at him, Eddie probably had a fix it for. But it was hard to stay on top of things when his husband was across the country. When he couldn't see or touch him, figure out what was wrong.

It was never the same. To fall asleep in their large bed alone was the worst. Yes, their dog, Millie, usually slept in their room, but it wasn't the same. Not by a long shot. He always found himself counting down the days until Richie returned, waiting patiently, or mostly very impatiently. He always found himself being more irritable than normal at the smallest things. Eddie wasn't the most ‘chill’ guy around, but it was worse when Richie was away. Much, MUCH worse if their friends were to believe. And while it chafed to admit, Eddie was sure that there was probably some truth to it.

Richie still hadn't spoken a word. And this, more than anything, had Eddie worried. Usually, he couldn't get the man to shut up, not that he really wanted to do that, of course. But whenever they talked it was always stories about this funny thing that happened, or some funny photo Richie had taken, or he'd tell Eddie about these interesting people he'd met.

Don't him wrong, Eddie was happy, more than happy even, that everything was going so well for Richie. It was amazing and exciting, and Eddie, well, he was so proud. His husband had found his calling, and people actually wanted to pay money to go to his comedy shows. Richie's big dream had come true, and Eddie would always support him.

But sometimes it hurt to hear him talk about how amazing everything was and be so far away. To always get secondhand accounts of events, to always get told that you had to be there to get it. So yeah, Eddie worried. It was a lot of new things, new impressions all the time. The thought that Richie might leave him for someone else had crossed his mind once or twice, but he'd refused to even entertain it for more than a couple of seconds. He was secure in their relationship. He knew that Richie loved him. They were married. Richie had cried at their wedding. Eddie was sure that his husband wasn't going anywhere.

Still, all the time spent away from each other left him with a heavy feeling in his stomach, one that kept him up at night. He was missing out on all these moments in Richie's life and he hated it. He wanted to experience his life with Richie, wanted to be the one to make memories and have in jokes with him. Just wanted to be with him. Wake up and see the ridiculously wild bedhead situation that in the morning was Richie's hair. Wanted to tease him about it, smoothing back his hair and tuck it behind his ear. Wanted to trace his soft

upper lip, lean in and capture his willing, smiling mouth in a lazy kiss. Eddie wanted to do that despite the morning breath. Because he was in love with his husband, and he wanted to start every morning the right way. With a kiss.

“Richie?”

When Richie still didn't speak, the worry Eddie felt really began to sink its claws into him. He knew that Richie didn't have the best self-confidence, that it didn't take a lot to make him falter. This, of course, wasn't a side to him most people saw. Their friend group, The Losers, they of course knew, and they supported him the best they could. But Eddie. Well, Eddie had seen him through it all. Every high and low, and Eddie had always stayed. When Richie came out to his parents, Eddie had been there. Whenever there was a particularly cruel article written about one of Richie's sets, Eddie was there. When he lost a job. When his grandmother had died. Eddie had been there for it all. And he'd been there for the good too. Had stood in the wings at Richie's first sold-out show bursting with joy, had seen how the audience had stood and clapped for him long past the normal, to the point that when Richie had left the stage, his eyes had glittered with happy tears, and Eddie had had to gently wipe them away when they streamed down his cheeks.

Every success. Every achievement. Every moment.

And Richie had always done the same for him. Had held him through every panic attack, helped him breathe, in out repeat. A constant steady presence that made him feel safe, feel sane. He'd helped him with his mom. Had helped every time Eddie had been scared about illnesses, imaginary and real. And he'd never made him feel like Eddie was too weird, too difficult, too much effort for him.

Richie had helped him with so many things, that at this point in their lives, Eddie couldn't remember everything anymore. Every single day Richie did something that made him smile. Something that made him feel loved. They'd met when they were five. They'd been a couple since high school. They had gotten married surrounded by their friends, happy and in love, bought a house, adopted a dog. They had built a life together; they were in this for the long haul. They would be together until they died. Because nothing else would do.

"Richie, come on. You've gotta talk to me. I can't help if you don't talk to me." If it sounded like Eddie was pleading, it was because he was. Anything to help Richie, that was the way Eddie rolled. Now and always.

"I want to come home," Richie whispered.

The weary words, and the distressed sob that followed it, had Eddie sitting up in bed, sleep all but forgotten. What Eddie felt in that moment, he couldn't describe. The emotion was too big for his body to contain, and his eyes stung.

"What happened, Richie?" And Eddie wanted to hold him more than anything, hold on and never let go, but the distance was too great. He would have to make do with hearing his voice.

"Nothing's necessarily wrong," Richie began, but then he let out another little shuddering sob, this one just as heartbreaking as the first, "I'm just so goddamn lonely, like, all the time. I know I keep saying how freaking amazing everything is and that I'm having the best time. But the truth is that I hate this. Doing the show is fine but

it's everything else. I hate the constant travelling, and being away from our house, and our bed. I miss the snuffled snores that Millie makes when she sleeps. Her soft paws, the way she'll always know when someone's on the couch and come bounding over, her crazy dance right before dinner. You know, when she's so excited for food? And I miss meeting up with the other Losers for movie night and dinners, even though we're all getting so old," Richie laughed at this, wetly. "But mostly, I miss waking up to you beside me. That cute little frown you have when you drive, and it's stressing you out. Every meal we have in our house. Every evening that it's just you and me, when we don't even need to say anything. Just exist. Just be. It's so quiet and warm. And I can't believe I'm fucking missing it all. And..." Richie paused now, "I just miss you. So much."

His words had come out haltingly, unsure, almost afraid. Like he was afraid Eddie wouldn't be on his side or wouldn't understand. But Eddie understood it all too well. That was how he felt too. There was no rhyme or reason to it, just feelings.

"Me too." It was the only thing he could think to say.

"Yeah?" Richie replied.

"Yeah."

"I don't know what to do, Eddie." Richie said then.

"There aren't that many tour dates left, right?" Eddie asked.

“A couple shows left, then we go back to California to finish up.”

Eddie, of course, already knew this. Had the date already circled on the calendar, had even drawn little hearts around Richie's name. Knew that when Richie eventually saw it, it would make him smile. He'd turn to Eddie, a smirk on his lips, and ask if he'd missed him that much, so much that he'd even decorated the calendar. Eddie would say yes, and Richie's smirk would turn into a delighted smile. And he'd surge forward, kissing Eddie breathless.

It was a dance Eddie knew well; one they always did. Their tradition.

“Just a couple venues left, Rich. You can do it. You're absolutely brilliant and hilarious. You've worked so hard to get here. This show, you love it. I know you do. I've heard the finished version, but I also heard and watched when you were writing it at home, walking around the house, mumbling to yourself. Watched how you created it, remember being in awe that my husband had written that. You don't have to do anything, don't have to finish if you don't want to or can't. But, if you're going to finish this, go out with a bang, then, don't do it for anyone else. Do it for yourself. Then, when you're done, you can decide if you want to do another tour or not in the future, or if you want to try something new. And if the answer is no, no more touring, then you'll figure out the next step. We'll figure out the next step. Together, like we've done everything else.”

He heard Richie sniffle through the phone, and quietly added, “And regardless of what happens, whatever you end up choosing, I hope you know that I'm always going to be here in our house with Millie. Wherever you go, however long you're gone, it doesn't matter. Always here, always waiting for you to come home.”

“Love you, Eds.”

Eddie smiled, “Love you.”

“Stay on the phone with me until I fall asleep?” Richie asked, his voice was once again hesitant.

“Anything you want.”

“I want you.”

Eddie’s cheeks hurt, but his smile only grew, “I want you too.”

“Soon,” Richie said. And it sounded like a promise.

Author's Note:

Day 7!